

# PROVIDING QUALITY CARE FOR THE WHOLE CHILD

By Cayla Orr and Hannah Bills

In their partnership with the YMCA, Healthy Children, Healthy Weights (HCHW) began working with KIPP Early Learning Center in December 2016, who has since made impressive strides in promoting healthy eating and active living through policy and practice. KIPP's director Lynné Steinhaus, strives to uphold their mission in providing the very best early childhood education possible for



infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, in addition to getting children ready for kindergarten. Throughout Lynné's career in child care, she has developed a passion for teaching children about healthy eating habits. Lynné jumped at the opportunity to work with HCHW and have her center receive Ohio Healthy Program (OHP) designation.

One thing Lynné noticed at the OHP trainings was other centers having push back from parents and teachers due to recent changes. Lynné shared, "We didn't really have that, the children were happy with healthy food. When we didn't have cupcakes on Valentine's Day, it wasn't really a big deal. They get really excited about the strawberries, and they don't ask for soda or anything like that." In regards to the parents, it has been an educational process, particularly with the healthy celebrations. By talking it through with them and explaining why it's important, it has been an easier transition. Lynné started hanging up the HCHW's posters, with photos and descriptions of the children actually participating in the activities. She states, "This makes it more real, it's not just a piece of paper saying what we have to do, we are actually doing it. It makes it more meaningful for the parents."

Lynné's team has been very excited about HCHW because it is the first time they've been involved with such a comprehensive health and wellness program. She feels this is important because they are setting the foundation for children for the rest of their lives. By using HCHW's family engagement resources, they are better able to do this by involving center families.

In addition, KIPP previously didn't focus on providing structured physical activity as kids were mostly provided with free play. Figuring out new ways to offer teacher-led activities has been Lynné's favorite part of the program. Lynné states, "I think it's really important to look at the whole child, and you guys do that."